

Case Western Reserve University has set up a page on the Internet at URL <http://gcrc.meds.cwru.edu/stachy.htm> that contains public information about the mold. The site includes a summary of the Cleveland outbreak of pulmonary hemosiderosis and describes symptoms of the illness, with a particular recommendation for parents to consult a doctor immediately if their infant develops noninjury-related nosebleeds. The site also contains a description of *S. atra* and tips for cleaning up the mold. The university suggests that large growths of mold should be inspected by the local health department, which can help assess the problem and ensure that the mold is indeed *S. atra* rather than one of the other, less insidious black molds that occur more commonly in homes. Also, large growths of *S. atra* should be cleaned up with the help of a professional abatement contractor, because even adults are not completely immune to the deleterious effects of the mold spores. Finally, the site lists a number of resources to contact for more information about *S. atra* and its effects.

Environmental Learning 2000

The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF), based in Washington, DC, is a nonprofit organization whose objective is to spread "essential environmental knowledge" to all U.S. citizens. The foundation defines essential environmental knowledge as "knowledge about the environment that every individual should have in order to be healthy and prosperous." To achieve this mission, the NEETF developed and recently launched Environmental Learning 2000, a five-year enterprise that is intended to revolutionize the way environmental education is perceived and conducted in the United States. Says Kevin Coyle, president of the NEETF, "Environmental Learning 2000 offers a unique approach to link the environment with issues of critical national concern, such as rising health care costs, business competitiveness, potential threats to drinking water supplies, and improving science education in the schools."

Environmental Learning 2000 is a four-pronged effort that includes a number of different programs in the areas of environmental health, business and the environment, natural resources management, and educational excellence. The theme running through all the programs is the idea of trickle-down education; if society's leaders can be taught, they can then teach the public about the risks and concerns, the problems and importance of the environment in every human life. The program is largely targeted toward the professional community, particularly industries, health care providers, water



Menacing mold. *Stachybotrys atra*, a black mold, produces a toxin that can wreak havoc on the lungs of infants.

treatment utilities, and educators.

Two Environmental Learning 2000 programs are aimed as much at actually improving environmental health as at educating people to its importance. The Environ-Med Program is designed to remedy the current dearth of knowledge among health care professionals regarding environmental health, specifically how to recognize, effectively treat, and prevent environmentally based illnesses. Environ-Med supports activities that will address environmental health training in medical and nursing schools, develop assessment and diagnostic tools for practicing health professionals, and convene the field's leaders on an annual basis. This program will also reach into the managed care arena, as well as pull in the media and the general public. The Water-Source Project, planned to last for three years, focuses on educating water utilities, community leaders, and government agencies on the advantages of source water protection (i.e., proactively protecting drinking water sources instead of relying on costly treatment plants). Foundation literature notes the exorbitant cost of ignorance and inaction: over \$140 billion may be spent over the next 15 years on cleaning up water that could just as easily be kept from becoming polluted in the first place.

The Environmental Competitiveness Institute is a mentoring program in which larger companies that are running effective environmental health programs are matched with smaller companies that lack the resources necessary to develop such programs on their own. The larger companies share their experience and help their smaller partners implement environmental performance programs. Such programs, while benefiting the environment, also frequently lead to

improved corporate profits through decreased operational costs.

Along with several public agencies, the NEETF sponsors National Public Lands Day. This annual event is held in communities across the United States, and volunteers from each community spend the day participating in local land and recreational improvements. It's an opportunity for the public to become more familiar with local resources while necessary but costly work is accomplished through volunteer labor.

The NEETF has a four-part approach to enhancing environmental education in U.S. schools. First is the Foundations for the Future Program. Through this program, national standards are being set to ensure that kids in grades K-12 receive a balanced environmental education that is based on sound science. NEETF studies have shown that adding environmental education to a school's curriculum boosts students' overall scholastic performance in math, science, and social studies by giving them a better groundwork for understanding many of the principles of those subjects. Second, the organization conducts research to identify ways in which environmental education can be used to address issues of national importance, such as education reform. Third, the foundation directs a national awards program that honors outstanding achievements in environmental education by individuals or corporate bodies. Finally, the foundation has established a policy program that will develop new ways to implement the mandates of the foundation's guiding-star legislation, the National Environmental Education Act of 1990.

Passive Smoke Linked to Abnormal HDL in Children

Environmental, or passive, cigarette smoke has been linked with a number of serious health problems in children including upper respiratory infections, chronic cough, asthma, chronic ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome. Now it appears that exposure to environmental tobacco smoke may also cause children with abnormal cholesterol levels—already at risk for future heart disease—to be even more likely to develop the disease at some point.

A study published in the 2 September 1997 issue of *Circulation* showed that children who were exposed to environmental cigarette smoke at home had high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol levels that were as much as 10% lower than those of children who came from nonsmoking households. HDL cholesterol, frequently called "good" cholesterol, protects against heart attacks by culling fats from the bloodstream, which keeps the coronary arteries free of